

Restrictions on suction dredging for gold and other minerals

[Emergency rules](#) are currently in place on certain rivers and streams restricting suction dredging for gold and other minerals due to drought conditions. As noted in the list below, these activities are now prohibited in some waters and limited to certain hours in others. Emergency rules will be in place until further notice and may change in response to new developments.

A suction dredge is defined in state law as “a machine used to move submerged aggregate by hydraulic suction.” The following restrictions do NOT apply to gold panning.

NEW SECTION

WAC 220-660-30000A Mineral prospecting

Notwithstanding the provisions of WAC 220-660-300, effective immediately until further notice, it is unlawful to violate the following provisions, provided that unless otherwise amended, all permanent rules remain in effect:

You may leave excavation sites unfilled but you must level all tailing piles before moving to another excavation site or abandoning the excavation site. Tailing piles must not extend more than twelve inches above the surrounding bed.

Asotin County

Asotin Creek and tributaries from mouth to headwaters: Closed to suction dredging.

Chelan County

Wenatchee River from mouth to the Icicle River Road Bridge: Closed to suction dredging.

Icicle River from the mouth to 500 feet downstream of the Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery Barrier Dam: Closed to suction dredging.

Peshastin Creek and all tributaries: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

Clallam County

Quillayute River from the confluence of the Sol Duc and Bogachiel Rivers downstream 475 yards: Closed to suction dredging.

Sol Duc River including all tributaries: Closed to suction dredging.

Bogachiel River including all tributaries: Closed to suction dredging.

Calawah River including all tributaries: Closed to suction dredging.

Dickey River including all tributaries: Closed to suction dredging.

Clark County

East Fork Lewis River from mouth upstream to top boat ramp at Lewisville Park: Closed to suction dredging.

East Fork Lewis River from top boat ramp at Lewisville Park upstream to 400 feet below Horseshoe Falls: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

Washougal River from mouth upstream to Mt. Norway Bridge: Closed to suction dredging.

Washougal River from Mt. Norway Bridge upstream to the Salmon Falls Bridge: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

Columbia County

Tucannon River (Columbia/Garfield Co.) From Highway 12 Bridge to Cow Camp Bridge: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

Touchet River (Columbia/Walla Walla Co.) from mouth to the confluence of the North and South forks: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

(a) North Fork Touchet River from mouth to Spangler Creek: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

(b) North Fork Touchet River upstream from the confluence of Spangler Creek: Closed to suction dredging.

(c) South Fork Touchet River from mouth to Griffen Fork and above Griffen fork: Closed to suction dredging.

(d) Wolf Fork Touchet River from mouth to Coates Creek and Robinson Fork: Closed to suction dredging.

Ferry County

Kettle River and all tributaries from Barstow Bridge to headwaters, all portions contained within the United States: Closed to suction dredging.

Garfield County

Tucannon River (Columbia/Garfield Co.) From Highway 12 Bridge to Cow Camp Bridge: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

Grays Harbor County

Black River (Grays Harbor and Thurston Counties) from the mouth upstream to Black Lake: Closed to suction dredging.

Jefferson County

Clearwater River and its tributaries: Closed to suction dredging.

Queets River and its tributaries including Matheny Creek and the Salmon River outside Olympic National Park and the Quinault Reservation: Closed to suction dredging.

Big Quilcene mainstem: Closed to suction dredging.

King County

Raging River from the mouth upstream: Closed to suction dredging.

South Fork Skykomish River (Snohomish/King Co.) from Sunset Falls upstream and all tributaries, including the Beckler, Foss, Miller and Rapid Rivers and their tributaries: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

Kittitas County

Little Naches River: Closed to suction dredging.

Teanaway River, including West, Middle and North Forks: Closed to suction dredging.

Swauk Creek and all tributaries downstream from the confluence of Williams Creek: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to until one-half hour after official sunset.
Williams Creek and all tributaries and Swauk Creek and all tributaries upstream from the confluence of Williams Creek: Closed to suction dredging.

Lewis County

Newaukum River and all tributaries: Closed to suction dredging.

Lincoln County

Spokane River (Spokane/Lincoln Co.) from upstream Boundary at Plese Flats Day Use Area to Idaho State Boundary: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

Okanogan County

Methow River from County Road 1535 Bridge (lower Burma Rd.) upstream to Weeman Bridge (8 miles upstream of Winthrop): Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

Okanogan River from the Hwy 97 Bridge immediately upstream of the mouth to Zosel Dam: Closed to suction dredging.

Similkameen River from the mouth upstream to Enloe Dam: Closed to suction dredging.

Pend Oreille County

Sullivan Creek and all tributaries from mouth to headwaters: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

Spokane River tributaries, including Little Spokane River and tributaries (Spokane/Pend Oreille/Stevens Co.) from State Route 25 Bridge upstream to Monroe Street Dam: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

Skagit County

Sauk River (Skagit/Snohomish Co.) From the confluence with the Suiattle River upstream including North Fork to the falls and South Fork to headwaters: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

Suiattle River Tributaries Buck, Downey and Sulpher Creeks: Closed to suction dredging.

Samish River from I-5 to headwaters and Friday Creek from the mouth upstream: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

Stillaguamish River (Skagit/Snohomish Co.) from Marine Drive upstream including the North and South Forks and all tributaries: Closed to suction dredging.

Snohomish County

Skykomish River from mouth upstream: Closed to suction dredging except the section around Reiter Ponds remains open from the Gold Bar/Big Eddy Access (Hwy. 2 Bridge) upstream to the confluence of the North and South Forks.

North Fork Skykomish River from mouth upstream including all tributaries: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

South Fork Skykomish River (Snohomish/King Co.) from Sunset Falls upstream and all tributaries, including the Beckler, Foss, Miller and Rapid Rivers and their tributaries: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

Wallace River from the mouth upstream including all tributaries: Closed to suction dredging.

Stillaguamish River (Skagit/Snohomish Co.) from Marine Drive upstream including the North and South Forks and all tributaries: Closed to all suction dredging.

Sauk River (Skagit/Snohomish Co.) From the confluence with the Suiattle River upstream including North Fork to the falls and South Fork to headwaters: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

Spokane County

Spokane River (Spokane/Lincoln Co.) from upstream Boundary at Plese Flats Day Use Area to Idaho State Boundary: Closed daily to suction dredging 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

Spokane River tributaries, including Little Spokane River and tributaries (Spokane/Pend Oreille/Stevens Co.) from State Route 25 Bridge upstream to Monroe Street Dam: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

Stevens County

Spokane River tributaries, including Little Spokane River and tributaries (Spokane/Pend Oreille/Stevens Co.) from State Route 25 Bridge upstream to Monroe Street Dam: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

Colville River and all tributaries from mouth to headwaters: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

Thurston County

Black River (Grays Harbor and Thurston Counties) from the mouth upstream to Black Lake: Closed to suction dredging.

Nisqually River (Thurston Co.) from the mouth to the military tank crossing bridge: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour before official sunrise.

Walla Walla County

Walla Walla River from McDonald Road Bridge to Oregon State Boundary: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

Mill Creek from Bennington Dam to State Line: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

Whatcom County

South Fork Nooksack from the mouth to Skookum Creek and from Wanlick Creek to headwaters including Wanlick and all tributaries: Closed to suction dredging.

Yakima County

Ahtanum Creek, including North and Middle Forks: Closed to suction dredging.

American River: Closed to suction dredging.

Yakima River from Interstate 82 Bridge at Union Gap to South Cle Elum Bridge: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM to one-half hour after official sunset.

Naches River from Tieton River to Bumping River/Little Naches River: Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM until one-half hour after official sunset.

Rattlesnake Creek (mainstem): Closed daily to suction dredging from 2 PM until one-half hour after official sunset.

ATTACHMENT A

Reasons for this finding: A lack of snowpack from an unusually warm winter has resulted in drought conditions throughout much of Washington. A healthy snowpack slowly provides water to rivers and streams, helping to sustain fish through the drier summer months. But, with little or no snowpack, flows in many rivers have dropped significantly and water temperatures have increased – conditions that are lethal to fish. In response, WDFW has placed drought-related fishing closures and restrictions on over 60 rivers and streams.

Low water and higher than normal water temperatures are limiting fish movement and making them more susceptible to diseases. In addition, stream flows have fallen low enough to concentrate fish into small areas of refugia where they are highly susceptible to additional stress from disturbance caused by suction dredging. To protect fish life, WDFW is aligning the authorized work times for suction dredging in the Gold and Fish Rules for Mineral Prospecting and Placer Mining with drought-related fishing closures or restrictions now in effect. There is insufficient time to adopt permanent rules.

Per permanent rule, work in the wetted perimeter or frequent scour zone is authorized from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset. The daily closures from 2 PM to one-half hour after sunset are intended to reduce additional stress to fish from aquatic plant removal activities during periods of the day when fish are stressed from elevated temperatures. In addition, some streams are closed to suction dredging because of record low flows due to lack of winter snowpack and rainfall. Stream flows have fallen low enough to concentrate fish into small areas of refugia where they are highly susceptible to additional stress from disturbance at these temperatures further reduces survival. (15-262, 8/13/2015)